

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information processing apparatus capable of acquiring, from a peripheral device management apparatus for managing information specific to a peripheral device connected through a local area network, information specific to said peripheral device through an external network, and, from a general-purpose computer management apparatus for managing information specific to a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network, information specific to said general-purpose computer through said external network, thereby executing unified management on said peripheral device and on said general-purpose computer, the information processing apparatus comprising:
- discrimination means for discriminating whether the information received through said external network is specific to said peripheral device or is relating to said general-purpose computer;
- specifying means for specifying, in case said discrimination means recognizes that the information received through said external network is specific to the peripheral device and indicates absence of inventory, information for specifying an expendable included in said information indicating the absence of inventory and information for specifying a user who is the owner of the expendable showing said

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absence of inventory; and

display control means for causing a
predetermined display unit to display information
indicating the type of said expendable specified by
5 said specifying means and information for identifying
said user.

2. An information processing apparatus
according to claim 1, further comprising instruction
10 means for instructing, to a distribution server
communicable through an external network, delivery of
the expendable of the type specified by said
specifying means to a destination based on said user
information.

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3. An information processing apparatus
according to claim 1, wherein said user information
includes an e-mail address of a communication address,
and the apparatus further comprises confirmation mail
20 informing means for sending, to said e-mail address,
a confirmation mail for instructing the delivery of
the expendable of the type specified by said
specifying means and showing absence of inventory.

25 4. An information processing apparatus
according to claim 2, further comprising alarm means
for informing an alarm to said distribution server or

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to a portable terminal assigned to a person in charge
of distribution, in response, after the instruction
for delivery by said instruction means, to reception
of information indicating a decrease or absence of
5 the inventory of said expendable of the type
specified by said specifying means.

5. An information processing apparatus
according to claim 1, wherein said inventory absence
10 information includes information indicating the
remaining number of inventory of said specified
expendable.

6. An information processing apparatus
15 according to claim 1, wherein said acquisition means
includes first acquisition means for acquiring,
through said external network, information on a
general-purpose computer connected through said local
area network and second acquisition means for
20 acquiring, through said external network, information
specific to the peripheral device connected through
said local area network, wherein said first
acquisition means acquires information relating to
said general-purpose computer in a first format
25 specific to said general-purpose computer and said
second acquisition means acquires information
specific to said peripheral device in a second format

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specific to said peripheral device.

7. An information processing apparatus
according to claim 6, further comprising conversion
5 means for converting the information of said first
format relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said first acquisition means into said
second format, wherein said predetermined display
unit is provided in an apparatus capable of
10 interpreting said second format and is capable of
display based on said second format.

8. An information processing apparatus
according to claim 6, further comprising conversion
15 means for converting the information of said second
format relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said second acquisition means into said
first format, wherein said predetermined display unit
is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting
20 said first format and is capable of display based on
said first format.

9. An information processing apparatus
according to claim 6, further comprising conversion
25 means for converting the information of said first
format relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said first acquisition means and the

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information of said second format relating to said peripheral device and acquired by said second acquisition means into a common third format, wherein said predetermined display unit is capable of display
5 based on said third format.

10. An information processing apparatus comprising:

reception means for receiving inventory absence
10 information indicating that the inventory number of expendable of a predetermined type used in a peripheral device is less than a predetermined number, together with information for specifying the user; and
15 informing means for informing an alarm to a communication address assigned to a person in charge of distribution, in response, after an instruction for delivery according to the information on the expendable of predetermined type included in the
20 inventory absence information received by said reception means and said information for specifying the user, to reception of information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of said predetermined type by said
25 reception means.

11. A management control method for an

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predetermined display unit to display information indicating the type of said expendable specified by said specifying means and information for identifying said user.

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12. A management control method according to claim 11, further comprising an instruction step of instructing, to a distribution server communicable through an external network, delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying means to a destination based on said user information.

13. A management control method according to claim 12, wherein said user information includes an e-mail address of a communication address, and the method further comprises a confirmation mail informing step of sending, to said e-mail address, a confirmation mail for instructing the delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying step and showing absence of inventory.

14. A management control method according to claim 12, further comprising an alarm step of informing an alarm to said distribution server or to a portable terminal assigned to a person in charge of distribution, in response, after the instruction for delivery by said instruction step, to reception of

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5 15. A management control method according to
claim 11, wherein said inventory absence information
includes information indicating the remaining number
of inventory of said specified expendable.

10 16. A management control method according to
claim 11, wherein said acquisition step includes a
first acquisition means for acquiring, through said
external network, information on a general-purpose
computer connected through said local area network
15 and a second acquisition step of acquiring, through
said external network, information specific to the
peripheral device connected through said local area
network, wherein said first acquisition step acquires
information relating to said general-purpose computer
20 in a first format specific to said general-purpose
computer and said second acquisition step acquires
information specific to said peripheral device in a
second format specific to said peripheral device.

25 17. A management control method according to
claim 16, further comprising a conversion step for
converting the information of said first format

relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said first acquisition step into said
second format, wherein said predetermined display
unit is provided in an apparatus capable of
5 interpreting said second format and is capable of
display based on said second format.

18. A management control method according to
claim 16, further comprising a conversion step of
10 converting the information of said second format
relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said second acquisition step into said
first format, wherein said predetermined display unit
is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting
15 said first format and is capable of display based on
said first format.

19. A management control method according to
claim 16, further comprising a conversion step of
20 converting the information of said first format
relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said first acquisition step and the
information of said second format relating to said
peripheral device and acquired by said second
25 acquisition step into a common third format, wherein
said predetermined display unit is capable of display
based on said third format.

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20. A management control method comprising:

a reception step of receiving inventory absence
information indicating that the inventory number of
expendable of a predetermined type used in a
5 peripheral device is less than a predetermined number,
together with information for specifying the user;
and

an informing step of informing an alarm to a
communication address assigned to a person in charge
10 of distribution, in response, after an instruction
for delivery according to the information on the
expendable of predetermined type included in the
inventory absence information received by said
reception step and said information for specifying
15 the user, to reception of information indicating a
decrease or absence of the inventory of said
expendable of said predetermined type by said
reception step.

20 21. A computer program to be executed by an
information processing apparatus capable of acquiring,
from a peripheral device management apparatus for
managing information specific to a peripheral device
connected through a local area network, information
25 specific to said peripheral device through an
external network, and, from a general-purpose
computer management apparatus for managing

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information specific to a general-purpose computer
connected through said local area network,
information specific to said general-purpose computer
through said external network, thereby executing
5 unified management on said peripheral device and on
said general-purpose computer, the program
comprising:

a discrimination step of discriminating whether
the information received through said external
10 network is specific to said peripheral device or is
relating to said general-purpose computer;

a specifying step for specifying, in case said
discrimination step recognizes that the information
received through said external network is specific to
15 the peripheral device and indicates absence of
inventory, information for specifying an expendable
included in said information indicating the absence
of inventory and information for specifying a user
who is the owner of the expendable showing said
20 absence of inventory; and

a display control step of causing a
predetermined display unit to display information
indicating the type of said expendable specified by
said specifying means and information for identifying
25 said user.

22. A computer program according to claim 21,

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further comprising an instruction step of instructing,
to a distribution server communicable through an
external network, delivery of the expendable of the
type specified by said specifying means to a
5 destination based on said user information.

23. A computer program according to claim 22,
wherein said user information includes an e-mail
address of a communication address, and the method
10 further comprises a confirmation mail informing step
of sending, to said e-mail address, a confirmation
mail for instructing the delivery of the expendable
of the type specified by said specifying step and
showing absence of inventory.

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24. A computer program according to claim 22,
further comprising an alarm step of informing an
alarm to said distribution server or to a portable
terminal assigned to a person in charge of
20 distribution, in response, after the instruction for
delivery by said instruction step, to reception of
information indicating a decrease or absence of the
inventory of said expendable of the type specified by
said specifying step.

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25. A computer program according to claim 21,
wherein said inventory absence information includes

information indicating the remaining number of inventory of said specified expendable.

26. A computer program according to claim 21,
5 wherein said acquisition step includes a first acquisition means for acquiring, through said external network, information on a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network and a second acquisition step of acquiring, through
10 said external network, information specific to the peripheral device connected through said local area network, wherein said first acquisition step acquires information relating to said general-purpose computer in a first format specific to said general-purpose
15 computer and said second acquisition step acquires information specific to said peripheral device in a second format specific to said peripheral device.

27. A computer program according to claim 26,
20 further comprising a conversion step for converting the information of said first format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said first acquisition step into said second format, wherein said predetermined display unit is provided in an
25 apparatus capable of interpreting said second format and is capable of display based on said second format.

28. A computer program according to claim 26,
further comprising a conversion step of converting
the information of said second format relating to
said general-purpose computer and acquired by said
5 second acquisition step into said first format,
wherein said predetermined display unit is provided
in an apparatus capable of interpreting said first
format and is capable of display based on said first
format.

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29. A computer program according to claim 26,
further comprising a conversion step of converting
the information of said first format relating to said
general-purpose computer and acquired by said first
15 acquisition step and the information of said second
format relating to said peripheral device and
acquired by said second acquisition step into a
common third format, wherein said predetermined
display unit is capable of display based on said
20 third format.

30. A computer program to be executed by an
information processing apparatus, comprising:

a reception step of receiving inventory absence
25 information indicating that the inventory number of
expendable of a predetermined type used in a
peripheral device is less than a predetermined number,

an informing step of informing an alarm to a communication address assigned to a person in charge of distribution, in response, after an instruction for delivery according to the information on the expendable of predetermined type included in the inventory absence information received by said reception step and said information for specifying the user, to reception of information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of said predetermined type by said reception step.

31. A memory medium storing a computer readable program to be executed by an information processing apparatus capable of acquiring, from a peripheral device management apparatus for managing information specific to a peripheral device connected through a local area network, information specific to said peripheral device through an external network, and, from a general-purpose computer management apparatus for managing information specific to a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network, information specific to said general-purpose computer through said external network, thereby executing unified management on said peripheral

device and on said general-purpose computer, the
program comprising:

a discrimination step of discriminating whether
the information received through said external
5 network is specific to said peripheral device or is
relating to said general-purpose computer;

a specifying step for specifying, in case said
discrimination step recognizes that the information
received through said external network is specific to
10 the peripheral device and indicates absence of
inventory, information for specifying an expendable
included in said information indicating the absence
of inventory and information for specifying a user
who is the owner of the expendable showing said
15 absence of inventory; and

a display control step of causing a
predetermined display unit to display information
indicating the type of said expendable specified by
said specifying means and information for identifying
20 said user.

32. A memory medium storing computer readable
codes, the codes comprising:

a reception step of receiving inventory absence
25 information indicating that the inventory number of
expendable of a predetermined type used in a
peripheral device is less than a predetermined number,

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an informing step of informing an alarm to a
communication address assigned to a person in charge

5 of distribution, in response, after an instruction
for delivery according to the information on the
expendable of predetermined type included in the
inventory absence information received by said
reception step and said information for specifying
10 the user, to reception of information indicating a
decrease or absence of the inventory of said
expendable of said predetermined type by said
reception step.